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A Coorg never says that a lamp has gone out. He says instead, 'the lamp is brighter' (*boḷicha dumb pōchi*). This kind of euphemism is employed on other occasions also: the Koḍagi word for a tiger is '*nari*' which means a jackal in every other Dravidian language.

Again, no Coorg says that 'a cobra has bitten So-and-so'. He says instead, 'a creeper has bitten So-and-so'. Finally, after nightfall no one mentions the barber. If they have to refer to him they say instead, 'the scraper of heads'. Amongst the Hindus in Mysore the barber is referred to after nightfall as 'one whose name may not be mentioned'. A barber is inauspicious, and contact with him is defiling. He is also associated with inauspicious occasions such as death, as mourners have to be shaved. Women specially dread the barber, as until recently among the highest castes widows were required to have their heads shaved entirely.

In every one of the cases we have mentioned circumlocution is employed to avoid reference to an unpleasant object or event. The bite of a snake is always unpleasant and frequently fatal; a barber suggests death and widowhood; and it is much better to think of a tiger as a jackal. The euphemistic reference to the extinction of a lamp has a similar purpose: a lamp is the symbol of the solidarity and strength of the *okka*, and its sudden extinction refers to the decay and extinction of the *okka*. It also refers to the withdrawal of the protective power of the ancestors and the deities who are invoked while saluting a lamp.

Among the Hindus of the eastern plains it is obligatory to light a lamp in the house as soon as it is dark. A house without a lamp suggests that everyone is dead in the house, or that they are too poor to light one.

The ritual attitude prevalent towards the domestic lamp is easily extended to fire generally, and to the sun. These again provide points of contact with Sanskritic or All-India Hinduism.

The kitchen stove is a convenient focus for the general ritual attitude existing towards fire. The kitchen stove, like the domestic lamp, stands for the unity, strength, and protective power of the *okka* and this fact finds ritual expression. When a member of the *okka* is dead and it is decided to cremate his body, the funeral pyre is fired with a torch lighted from embers from the kitchen stove. The torch is made with twigs collected from the domestic burial-ground.

The belief in the protective power of *teḷi nīr* is again the result of

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with a condition of ritual purity. It is obvious that in the above instances physical dirt has been identified with ritual impurity. Purification consists in taking a bath and wearing pure clothes. Dirt, then, is seen as ritual impurity, and cleanliness as ritual purity. It is necessary, however, to stress that they are ritual and not natural states.

Birth and death both result in ritual impurity for the entire household for several days. This ritual impurity will not disappear even if the impure person has a dozen baths a day. But, once the prescribed period is over, the individual attains his normal ritual status after a bath. It is necessary to stress that ritual purity is fundamentally different from cleanliness, though they overlap frequently. A simple association of ritual purity with cleanliness, and ritual impurity with dirtiness, would be a neat arrangement, but it would falsify the facts. One comes across ritually pure robes which are very dirty, and snow-white clothes which are ritually impure.

A corpse is ritually impure and contact with it results in pollution. The crow, which is a scavenger bird, and is everywhere associated with death, is also impure. The spirits of dead ancestors assume the forms of crows on certain ritual occasions when they are propitiated. The conclusion of funeral rites is marked everywhere by the offer of balls of rice to the dead man's spirit. These balls are kept either on the roof of the house or on the ground at some distance from the house. If the crows fall to these balls soon, it is believed that the dead man is satisfied. Delay in the arrival of the crows indicates that the dead man is dissatisfied.

If the crows perch on a roof and caw, the death of someone under that roof is presaged. A man who sees two crows mating will die soon after unless he sends a false message announcing his death to his kinsmen. Nowadays it is not unusual for a person who has seen two crows mating to send a telegram announcing his death to his kinsmen.[1] The mating of crows means their increase, and the man who sees it is likely to die. The way he can counteract this is by announcing his death as soon as he has seen the crows mate. The ends of justice are met by such an announcement.

If a crow's droppings fall on a person, he or she will have to dip in a tank or river a thousand times. This is extremely inconvenient,

[1] Needless to say, this causes the unfortunate kinsfolk a considerable amount of worry and suffering.

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on the eighteenth day, in the evening, after the shot has been fired freeing the village from the restrictions in force during the festival. Similarly, no Poleya may leave his hut and show himself to a member of a high caste during the first eighteen days of the festival. They are specially forbidden to show themselves to the festival-priests (*kāvukāras*). The Poleyas are very greatly afraid of Kētrappa, whom they call 'big god' (*dodda dēvaru*), and it is believed that Kētrappa will punish them if they show themselves to the villagers during the festival.

The festival of the village-deity usually includes a ceremony called *tappaḍaka* (enumeration of restrictions), in which all the adult villagers assemble together at the temple and take a vow to the effect that they will observe certain restrictions for the duration of the festival.

No villager may fire his gun during the festival, nor may he kill an animal for his food. He is not permitted to break an egg or coconut, or prepare liquor or season his curries. He may not spread a mat or carpet on the benches in the veranda or hall.

Sometimes the villagers are permitted to import meat from another village, the prohibition being only on the animal being killed within the village. Even where such concessions are made to the ordinary villagers, the festival-priests are strictly enjoined to keep off even imported meat.

The festival-priests have to refrain from sexual intercourse during the festival. They are also enjoined not to touch the ordinary high-caste villager who, it must be remembered, is himself in a condition of ritual purity. Such contact defiles them for the rest of the day, and only a bath in cold water early next morning restores them to their condition of great ritual purity. There are different levels of ritual purity, and each level is impurity with reference to a higher level.

The festival-priests are much more important for the festival than ordinary villagers. They dress and worship the idol. Usually one or more of them are oracles of one or other of the deities in the village temple. Their duties require their being frequently very near the idols and other representations of the deities they worship. Consequently, they have to be in a condition of great ritual purity. They have to observe more restrictions regarding food and other matters than ordinary villagers. The degree of

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unrelated to the rest of the structure of the festival of a village-deity.[1]

X

Some of the ritual acts performed and practices observed at mourning are obviously reversals or inversions of the acts and practices performed on good-sacred or auspicious occasions. For instance, the corpse is made to lie on a mat spread with the underside on top. It is true that like the subject of *mangala* the corpse is dressed in a white gown, but the latter is reversed in some way: it is worn with the underside uppermost, or with the left end of the gown coming on top of the right end. On auspicious occasions the proper side has to be on top, and the right end should rest on top of the left.

After the corpse has been laid in the grave, the surviving spouse throws three handfuls of earth into the grave. He (or she) twists his hand (*terangai* = twisted hand) while throwing the earth into the grave. The eldest son and other relatives follow the surviving spouse. If the corpse is going to be cremated instead of being buried, the surviving spouse sets fire to the pyre by thrusting a firebrand into it. Again, he employs the twisted hand while setting fire to the pyre (*terangolli* = twisted firebrand).

In ritual circumambulation, movement in the clockwise direction is prescribed for auspicious occasions, while anti-clockwise movement is prescribed for inauspicious occasions. The groom goes round the sacred tripod stool clockwise. A devotee goes round the temple clockwise. But the mourners go round the funeral pyre in the anti-clockwise way. Similarly, the bier is thrice carried round the paved yard before the mourning-house, the bier carriers moving anti-clockwise.

There is an interesting little problem here: while clockwise movement is restricted to auspicious occasions and anti-clockwise movement to inauspicious occasions, on both kinds of occasion the subject goes round thrice. That is to say, both the mourner as well as the groom goes round *thrice*. How is it that the principle

[1] The restrictions observed during the village-deity's festival vary from village to village. As regards the food restrictions observed on the fast day the general idea seems to be to avoid everyday diet and to starve oneself as far as possible. In some festivals only roots and boiled plantains are allowed. Steam-baked pudding (*puṭṭ*), a favourite dish of Coorgs, is prohibited in some places. Green gram *pāyasa* (liquid dish) is generally allowed except in a few villages.

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of 'reversal' operates in some instances while 'identity' operates in some others? If the principle of 'reversal' had been consistently carried out in the above instance, the mourners should have gone round an even number of times.

White rice grains are used in auspicious ritual, whereas rice grains yellowed with turmeric powder are used in inauspicious ritual. This is not the same as 'reversal' though akin to it. It is called 'confinement' here: certain ritual acts are confined to mourning and they may not be performed on auspicious occasions.

A mango or *pavili* tree which is growing in the burial-ground, and green, is cut down for the funeral pyre. The *entire tree* has to be used for cremating the corpse. If a branch or twig remains over, a chicken is killed and cremated with it. It is inauspicious not to use up the entire tree. Similarly, if a grave which is being dug has to be abandoned and another has to be started, a chicken is buried in the former. Otherwise there will be another death in the house in the near future.

The leaves of the *bainé* palm (*caryota urens*) are associated with death: on the day before *māda* a *pandal* is put up before the mourning-house and the roof of the *pandal* is covered with *bainé* leaves. The corpse is fanned with a fan of *bainé* leaves. Again, when a man without relatives wants to have his obsequies performed during his lifetime alone, a *pandal* of *bainé* leaves is put up before his house.

While *bainé* leaves are used exclusively in funeral ritual, toddy is used on all kinds of ritual occasions. Systematization has not been carried to the extent of confining *all* products of the *bainé* palm to funeral ritual.

Rice yellowed with turmeric is sprinkled all along the way from the mourning-house to the place where the corpse is buried. Usually a man sprinkles the rice with his hands as he accompanies the funeral procession to the burial-ground. Sometimes, however, the rice is put into a bag and loaded on a pack-bullock. Two tiny holes are bored in this bag and the bullock is driven behind the corpse to the burial-ground. The bullock may not be used for any other purpose subsequently.

On the day before *māda*, first-grade mourners offer to the spirit of the dead person rice mixed with curd, plantain, and *ghī*. A quantity of this mixture is carried by him to the 'sacrificial post' in front of the mourning-house and placed on the plank on top of

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the post. After crows have consumed the offerings, the family friend kicks the post awry. On the next morning he cuts it down with an axe. The first-grade mourners pull down the stoves they had erected to cook their food.

In the above ritual is seen the destruction of articles used in mourning ritual, and the purpose of such destruction is to ensure their 'confinement' to mourning. Things associated with bad-sacredness and pollution themselves become bad-sacred and polluted. Consequently, they have to be destroyed.

'Inversion' and 'confinement' underlie more funeral rites than 'identity'. But it is important to note that 'identity' also exists. For instance, the corpse, which is ritually impure, is made to lie on a pure bench in the central hall. Besides, its head is made to touch the south-western pillar.

XI

Almost every Coorg adult chews betel leaves and areca-nut, and addicts chew all day. Lime paste is spread over the rough side of the leaf and the leaf is put into the mouth along with small bits of areca-nut. Frequently bits of *catechu* and tobacco are chewed along with betel leaves and areca-nut.

At night, after dinner, the men chew betel leaves in the veranda, and the women in one of the inner rooms. A man or woman looks forward to this part of the day: there is no more work to be done and everyone is at leisure. Talk flows freely.

The chewing of betel leaves is also intimately associated with married life. The husband and wife frequently chew betel together. The wife applies the paste, folds the leaf, and gives it to her husband. Until recently, among the upper castes in south India, unmarried boys and girls were told to keep away from betel leaves and areca-nut. Indulgence in betel leaves was a symbol of the married state.

Guests are offered betel leaves and areca-nut both to chew and to carry home. Failure to offer betel leaves to a guest would almost amount to an insult.

Betel leaves and areca-nut are indispensable on any ritual occasion. They must accompany every ritual gift or payment, whether it is made to another person or spirit or deity.

The chewing of betel leaves represents full participation in

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they live are worshipped on certain occasions. In south India there is a belief that a cobra lives to a very great age, and that as it gets older its tail becomes shorter. During the last period of its life it is said to develop wings. Coorgs share these beliefs, and some of them assert that a cobra-platform is built above the spot where a cobra ended its earthly existence.

All over India there is a reluctance to kill the cobra even though it is a dangerous creature. Coorgs abstain from killing cobras found in temples and believed to be harmless, whereas they do not hesitate to kill cobras found outside temples.

The following incident is significant: *A*'s brother did not consider it a sin to kill cobras. He one day found two cobras copulating and shot one of them dead. Several years passed without *A*'s brother obtaining a son. Some Brahmins told him that he had committed a great sin in killing a sacred creature like the cobra and that he would not have a son till he had performed the necessary expiatory ritual. They further told him that the sin was so great that even after he had performed the expiatory ritual no more than one son would be born to him. He duly performed the necessary expiatory ritual under the guidance of Brahmin priests, and later he made a pilgrimage to the great cobra-shrine of Subramaṇya in the Tulu country. Sometime afterwards his wife gave birth to a son, and together with his wife and son he again visited the shrine of Subramaṇya to express his gratitude to the deity.

Formerly, in the month of Scorpio, lamps were lit before the cobra-platform every evening. In addition, in a few Coorg *okkas*, a Brahmin priest visited the platform and worshipped the cobra-deity, using Sanskrit *mantras*.

In the cobra-worship of Coorgs are to be found certain elements which are common to Hindus all over India, others confined to Hindus in Peninsular India, and yet others which are found only in Malabar, South Canara, and Coorg. The worship of cobras takes certain forms in Malabar which are very similar to those in Coorg: in the former area it is common to find in the houses of high-caste Hindus a shrine for cobras in the south-western corner of the large compound round the ancestral house. The cobra-deities in a house are intimately associated with it. The vegetation growing around a cobra-platform may not be cut down, and no one in a condition of ritual impurity may approach the platform.

In the Kannaḍa, Tamil, and Telugu countries, on the other

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621 are checked sufficiently to prevent their overflowing the village, and that unity with other castes occupying different positions in the hierarchy is stressed. This was easier in the past because the hierarchy was tacitly accepted by the people, and low castes like Mēdas and Poleyas did not object to participating with the other castes in the village at a lower level, or even being completely [628] excluded on certain ritual occasions. Again the widespread prevalence of feuds between villages and between *nāḍs* tended to emphasize the unity of the village and check the segmentary action of caste.

796 At the *tappaḍaka* ritual, the members of the village or *nāḍ*
621 celebrating the festival of the local village-deity undertake to
784 observe certain dietetic and other restrictions while the festival lasts. The villagers may not kill an animal or break an egg or coconut for the table; and toddy may not be tapped within the village. Villagers who want to consume these articles have to import them from outside. The festival-priests, who are more important than ordinary villagers, may not consume even imported meat and toddy. They have to observe strict vegetarianism and teetotalism. They are also required to observe strict continence and avoid touching laymen.

796 In the Kētrappa festival, women in their periods are required to
784 leave the village and return to it only after the festival is over. Such a woman is in a condition of pollution; and her presence in the village is regarded as inconsistent with the ritual status of the village. People in a condition of birth- or death-pollution are also not allowed to participate in the festival.

No marriage may be performed during the festival. If a person dies in the village he has to be buried quietly, without the customary firing of guns and band.

These restrictions serve to show that the village (or *nāḍ*) is the concerned entity in the festival. The restrictions increase as concern increases—the festival-priests have to observe more restrictions than the laymen. The village (or *nāḍ*) observing the festival is marked off from other villages by these restrictions. Every villager knows that failure by any one of them to observe the restrictions might result in some misfortune to the entire village. The unity of the village is projected to the 'mystical' plane and is supported by ritual sanctions.

A brief account of a part of the ritual of enumeration of restric-

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tions at the harvest festival is necessary here. The headman of the most important temple in the village begans by asking whether everyone (every adult male, that is to say) is present.

The village-headman replies,[1] 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Village-headman: 'Has the *okka* which has committed the wrong, the one who stays outside (Poleyas), the one who heats and beats (Airis or smiths), the one who lifts and beats (Maḍivāḷas or washermen), without a single absentee, is everyone assembled here?'

Temple-headman: 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Temple-headman: 'He who knew how to sing, but refused to sing or dance at the festival, or when the villagers went singing and dancing to his house, he did not open the closed door, or he did not remove the bell-metal dining-dish leaned against the wall, or he did not light the sacred wall-lamp, or he did not mix with another, or he abused another villager during the festival, or he beat another villager all over the body, such a man shall pay a fine of forty-eight *paṇa*s for violating the injunctions of god.' Saying this the temple-headman extends his palm towards the village-headman who strikes it as witness to the statement.

The above rite makes it clear that the members of every caste in the village, including the Poleyas, attended the meeting of the village-assembly, and that everyone in the village had to observe certain rules and restrictions during the festival. The villagers had to keep their houses clean, with the doors open to receive a party of singers and dancers, with the sacred wall-lamp lit, they had to join in the singing and dancing, and finally they had to refrain from quarrelling, whatever the provocation. Failure to observe these rules was punished with a heavy fine.

At the festival of a village-deity *tappaḍaka* ritual is performed in the beginning and the restrictions enumerated to the members of the village (or *nāḍ*), whereas in the harvest festival *tappaḍaka* is an occasion for meting out punishment to those guilty of

[1] I have given above a translation of the formulas as they occur in *Paṭṭōḷi Paḷumé*, pp. 239–40.

In Kaḍiyetnāḍ the temple-headman, or a temple official, opens the proceedings, whereas near Mercara the village-headman does it. The person who has to reply again varies from region to region: it may be the village- or temple-headman, or some elder.

The date of the ritual of the enumeration of restrictions also varies from region to region.

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the mythology of All-India Hinduism, and also its myths and legends are Sanskritized and made the property of Hindus all over India. Thus the Kāvēri Purāṇa becomes a part of the mythology of All-India Hinduism.

The epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābārata, too, play an important part in the spread of Hinduism. The existence of 'Bhīma's pebble' near the source of Kāvēri has been mentioned earlier.[1] The Lakshmaṇatīrtha river which rises in the plateau of Brahmagiri in the extreme south of the province is named after Lakshmaṇa, brother of the hero of the older epic, Rāmāyaṇa. It is said that Rāma and Lakshmaṇa passed through Coorg in the course of their wanderings. Lakshmaṇa, the younger brother, whose obedience to Rāma is proverbial, and who is held up as a model for all younger brothers, disobeyed Rāma as soon as he (Lakshmaṇa) left Coorg and entered Malabar. He realized the enormity of his sin when he returned to Coorg and tried to atone for it by jumping into a fire which he made by shooting an arrow against the foot of the Irpu rocks. Rāma at once created a river to save his brother. This river he called Lakshmaṇatīrtha and it joins the Kāvēri in Mysore State. Rāma established a *linga* (symbol of Shiva or Ishwara) at the spot where Lakshmaṇa tried to commit suicide. The temple built there is called the Rāmēshwara temple (Ishwara established by Rāma), and it is probable that this temple is an imitation of the famous temple of Rāmēshwara, in the extreme south-eastern corner of India. Coorgs and others go on pilgrimage to the temple at Irpu during Shivārātri, an All-India festival in honour of Shiva.

Mountains, rivers, lakes, and trees become associated with characters and incidents in the epics and *purāṇas*. Such local myths are found in every part of India: Rāma built a temple here, Sīta bathed in this river near that rock, Shiva and Pārvati live in Kailāsa in the Himālayas, Agastya the sage meditated on top of that mountain, and so on. One's country becomes the home of one's gods. Patriotism acquires a religious quality.

Certain restrictions observed by Coorgs in common with other Hindus serve to mark them off from members of other religions. Occasionally these restrictions refer to certain incidents and characters in popular Hindu mythology. For instance, Coorg children are told to wash their feet and hands thoroughly before coming into the house from the street. The story of King Naḷa is told them as a warning: Naḷa one day left an unwashed spot on his

[1] [Cf. CAT, 116, p. 216 -- ANALYST]

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ankle and this enabled Saturn to possess him. Subsequently Nala lost his throne, was separated from his beloved wife, became deformed owing to serpent-bite, and finally ended up as cook to a king.

It is said in Coorg that Saturn jumped on Nala while the latter was standing under a *tāṇḍi* tree. Coorgs usually utter Nala's name when they have to pass under a *tāṇḍi* tree, and this is said to have the effect of warding off Saturn.

The above restrictions make the story of Nala, which is known to all Hindus, more immediate to Coorgs. The observance of common restrictions frequently marks off one community from another. Such observance can become a symbol of the community's solidarity and identity.

Coorgs, like other Hindus, regard the cow as sacred, and are opposed to killing it. They also abstain from eating beef. The cow has recently figured prominently in Hindu-Muslim relations and has come to be a symbol for Hindu solidarity and identity. Orthodox Hindu opinion regards the killing of cattle with abhorrence, even though the refusal to kill the vast number of useless cattle which exist in India today is detrimental to the economy of the nation.

Reverence for the cow unites Coorgs with other Hindus. It marks both off from other communities living in India.

Certain Sanskritic theological ideas have profoundly affected the lives of Coorgs. Ideas about *karma* and *dharma* are widespread among Coorgs, not only amongst the educated but also amongst the uneducated peasantry. The Coorg funeral song abounds in Sanskritic theological ideas: a man dies 'when the ration of rice kept for him by God Nārāyaṇa is finished'. After death, a bad man goes to hell (*naraka*) and a good man to heaven (*swarga*). A man is continually reborn till he attains salvation (*mōksha*). The surviving relatives pray that the dead man may not be reborn either as man or beast, because being implies suffering. They pray that he may go to heaven and not return to earth any more.

V

Sanskritic Hinduism has a plasticity which enables it to absorb local religious phenomena. Sanskritic deities frequently undergo changes in the process of being localized. An example will make

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VIII

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

I

243 788 COORG is primarily an agricultural country, and the bulk of the Coorg community is directly dependent on the land. Even those who are employed in the government have one or more branches of their *okkas* living in the ancestral house and attending to the cultivation of their ancestral lands.

There was no coffee in Coorg over a hundred years ago, and rice was then the most important crop in every way. A Coorg *okka*, and the family (or families) of Poleyas who were its slaves, cultivated the ancestral rice-fields. The Poleyas did much of the actual manual work on the estate under the close supervision of their Coorg masters; and every member of the Coorg *okka* directly or indirectly contributed to the work on the estate.

243 [438] A Coorg was completely preoccupied with the cultivation of rice from May to January, beginning with the first ploughing of the fields in May and ending with the harvesting of the crop in January. The surplus rice was sold in Malabar every summer, and this necessitated the organization of an annual caravan in which [796] every *okka* in the village (or *nāḍ*) participated. The festivals of the village-deities and weddings were performed in the summer months, after the men had returned from Malabar. Thus the social activities of a Coorg revolved round and adjusted themselves to the cultivation of rice and the sale of the surplus in Malabar.

The ancestral estate on which rice is grown, the ploughing, sowing, transplanting, and harvesting of the crop, the granary in which paddy is stored, and the measures used for measuring paddy and rice all receive ritual attention.

423 778 784 The ancestral estate, the most valuable part of which is the rice-field, is regarded as sacred. A Coorg is not allowed to walk in it wearing his sandals, just as he is not allowed to enter the inner parts of the ancestral house, or a temple, with his sandals on. He is also not allowed to whistle, or hold an umbrella over his head, while walking in the ancestral estate: both these acts are not consistent with the ritual respect which the estate has to be accorded.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

would allow him to go with pleasure, and said, I would immediately ask his Highness; but he begged me not, as he was sure the Rájah would allow him to go, if it were really for his advantage; here the conversation dropped, and being reported, it had a capital effect. 175* 643* 648*

This forenoon we took our leave of the Rájah, who received us in his palace, where he was amusing himself shooting blunt, but very heavy headed arrows, at different men, armed with spear and shield; whose business was to guard themselves, and receive the blow on their shields. He afterwards fired at marks, rode several horses in a ring, and lastly, managed two elephants, one of which he requested me to mount, and drove me about for a short time, and then dismounted. I had been informed, that in consequence of my increased rank, since I was last there, he had prepared an elephant as a present. I then imagined this was the one, but I was mistaken. He gave Meredith a bird's head, called Malliárapah, a gold-mounted Coorg knife, and sandalwood stick; and to me, two spears, a gold-mounted knife, sandalstick, and bird's head, and wished us a pleasant journey. With all this kindness, I could not help remarking, that his Highness had lost some of his affability, so easily are we led by circumstances, or by previous opinion, to fancy what, perhaps, has no existence. His conduct to us throughout had been kind and condescending, beyond that of any native Prince I ever knew, and was never equalled, in after times, but by the Rájah of Népaunee. He was particularly fond of the flower of the Calderah, called in Hindustáni, Kewrah, the odour of which is generally too strong for English organs, but sweet beyond any flower in the East. No man in his dominions dare use it, all being the property of the Mahá Swámi; as the finest flowers of their gardens are appropriated solely to the decoration of their temples, by all the other natives of India. [431] [422] [784]